



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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To: District Manager, CDD and All Field Office Managers
(Attention - District/Regional and Field Office FMO's)

From: DSD, Support Services

Subject: Official Fire Weather Forecasts for FY-2003

The California Wildfire Coordinating Group (CWCG) has been working to establish a coordinated effort for development and distribution of Official Fire Weather Forecasts for the 2003 fire season within California. The California Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is a participating member of the CWCG, and has been involved with this effort. The CWCG has worked closely with the National Weather Service (NWS) over the past several years as the NWS transitioned toward its new fire weather program. The transition was scheduled to occur January 2, 2003. By fall of 2002 it had become evident that the NWS had not fully met the requirements of their Transition Plan. In December the CWCG sent a letter to the NWS pointing out these deficiencies and asked them to postpone the transition. The main CWCG concerns were the loss of dedicated fire weather forecasters and that single fire management units would have to work with several NWS offices, and therefore multiple forecasts. Even with these identified deficiencies, the NWS elected to proceed with the transition on January 2, 2003. Ten NWS offices that support California began issuing fire weather forecasts, Fire Weather Watches, Red Flag Warnings, and NFDRS trend forecasts. The product scope is based on NWS county warning areas.

Currently, the Redding and Riverside Fire Weather Centers (FWC) are issuing daily forecasts in order to provide the best possible service to the field. These forecasts meld the NWS forecasts into a seamless product; are organized by predictive service areas; and are geographic area in scope. The Redding and Riverside FWCs will also provide site-specific forecasts for prescribed burns and wildfires. **These forecasts will be utilized as the official fire weather forecasts for the California Bureau of Land Management.** The FWCs will not issue Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings (as these products are the responsibility of the NWS), however they will be included in FWCs forecasts and products. The forecasts can be found on the FWCs web pages at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/fire/north/fwz/> for North Ops and <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/fire/south/fwz/> for South Ops.

Forests/units that receive forecasts from only one NWS office, and are currently satisfied with the forecasts can continue to utilize that NWS office. Forests/units will coordinate with their respective FWC on the decision to use the NWS forecasts. Forests/units will coordinate with their FWC for prescribed fire due to air quality issues.

The CWCG is continuing discussions with the NWS about the California Fire Weather program and hopes to have a resolution in the next 60 to 90 days. If you have questions or comments about the FWC products contact Chris Fontana at (530) 226-2730 for North Ops, or Ron Hamilton at (909) 276-6520 for South Ops.

Signed by:
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